

140 COMMENTARY ON MACAULAY'S
HISTORY

wealth *, and were ' falling insensibly into a democracy'.¹

This tendency appears in other writings of the times too. There is no revolution in English literature, but there is a definite development in a new direction.

English literature becomes by degrees more independent

of foreign influences, and characteristically national in the ideas it expresses and in the manner of expressing

them. And as the statesmen henceforth seek habitually to

secure the support of the people (or of that part of it possessing political rights), so the men of letters seem henceforth

to appeal to a larger constituency than their predecessors

had reached. They seek a wider audience than the Court

and the universities. This had for some time been appar-

ent in the case of writers on politics : it now becomes evi-

dent In the case of writers on philosophy and religion,²

and even in the case of poets and critics.

Dryden is an illustration. In his translations, his adaptations, and his critical writings he began to appeal to a larger public, and to seek to popularise literature.

In one of his essays Dryden says : 'Every age has a kind of universal genius, which inclines those that live in it to some particular studies/ ³ Part of the purpose of a history of England should be to bring out the unity of the spirit which pervades the different

manifestations of the national life. Macaulay's plan comprehended this. He purposed to combine a picture of all sides of the nation's life with a narrative of the events which happened between

¹ John Evelyn, *Diary*, Apr. 12, July 19, 1689 ; T. E. S. Clarke and H. C. Foxcroft, *Life of Gilbert Burnet* (1907), p. 385.

² Mark Pattison's essay on *Tendencies of Religious Thought in England, 1688-1750*, brings this out very clearly. *Essays*, ed. Henry Nettleship (1889), ii. 42 ft.

³ *An Essay of Dramatic Poesy*, in W. P. Ker, *Essays of John Dryden* (2 vols. ; 1926), i. 36.